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ABSTRACT

This part of the Country School Legacy: Humanities on the Frontier Project, funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and sponsored by the Mountain Plains Library Association, traces the biases faced by female school teachers in Utah from the nineteenth century to the present. First, there is a description of the early unequal treatment women teachers received in the form of lower salaries, in not being accepted as equal to men in teaching ability, and in prejudicial treatment concerning their employment. The document then highlights the improvements and advances in the status of women teachers from the 1920s to the present. (CM)

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY:

Humanities on the Frontier

SCHOOLMARMS OF UTAH: "SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL"

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COUNTRY SCHOOL LEGACY: HUMANITIES ON THE FRONTIER

The Mountain Plains Library Association is pleased to be involved in this project documenting the country school experience. Funding of this project from the National Endowment for the Humanities, cost sharing and other contributions enabled us all to work with the several state-based Humanities Committees as well as many other state and local libraries, agencies and interested citizens. We are deeply impressed not only by the enthusiasm for this work by all concerned but by the wealth of experience brought to bear in focusing attention on—and recapturing—this important part of history, and how we got here. This project seems to identify many of the roots and "character formation" of our social, political and economic institutions in the West.

Already the main Project objective seems to be met, stimulating library usage and increasing circulation of historical and humanities materials in this region. Public interest is rising in regional, state and local history. Oral history programs are increasing with greater public participation. The study of genealogy—and the search for this information—is causing much interest in consulting—and preserving—historical materials. What has been started here will not end with this project. The immediate results will tour the entire region and be available for any who wish the program, film, and exhibit. There will be more discussion of—and action on—the issues involving the humanities and public policies, past and present. The Mountain Plains Library Association is proud to be a partner in this work, the Country School Legacy, and its contribution to understanding humanities on the frontier.

Joseph J. Anderson
Nevada State Librarian
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SCHOOLMARMS OF UTAH:
"SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL"

by Jessie L. Embry

> "The first profession opened to women consisted of the sale of sexual love and was called prostitution; the second, an initiative of nineteenth-century Americans, was a traffic in maternal love and was called pedagogy."[1]

As schools were opened to the masses in the United States during the eighteenth and nineteenth century and education emphasized the moral training of youth as well as intellectual values, schools became an extension of the home, and teaching became an acceptable profession for women. Catharine Esther Beecher encouraged women to train as teachers in the early nineteenth-century. She said, "The school should be an appendage of the family state" and "woman, as mother and as teacher is to form and guide the immortal mind."[2] Beecher promoted these beliefs by helping to set up colleges for women and by recruiting the graduates for schools in the West. Her efforts were expanded by Horace Mann who encouraged the establishment of normal schools and attendance by women students. He explained, "Females are incomparably better teachers for young children than males. . . .Their manners are more mild and gentle, and hence in consonance with the tenderness of childhood."[3]

Women teachers were not only acceptable but required in the West. As families moved to the frontier, plans were made to establish farms, businesses, mines, and schools. Because of the division of male and female spheres, establishing the professions was considered male work and training of the young in all areas was considered women's role. Some married women were drafted to teach, but leaving the home to work for wages was not encouraged. Most teachers were young, single women who considered teaching a temporary employment until they married. As Catharine Beecher explained, teaching was "the road to honorable independence and extensive usefulness where she need not outstep the prescribed boundaries of feminine modesty."[4] Others chose teaching as a vocation and became part of a crusade to civilize the West. Whatever their motives though, teaching provided income and employment in an area considered within the female sphere.[5]

Utah teachers followed the same pattern. Some women came to the area as missionaries and to teach in the Congregationist Church's New West schools and the Methodist schools and to convert the Mormon children to Christianity. They were mainly young single women who stayed a few years and then returned to the East. Some stayed in the small Utah communities for the rest of their lives and made teaching their vocation.[6] Mormon women like Mary Ann Grant also devoted a lifetime to "the success of her boys and girls."[7]

Most women teachers in the 'state especially around the turn

of the twentieth century saw education as a temporary employment before they embarked on "the more natural place in the world's work."[8] They entered normal school for one, two, or four years, depending on the state requirements for a certificate at the time and then returned to their hometowns or went to rural Utah to work. Many met dashing young cowboys and settled permanently in the area. Their contracts stated that once they married they could no longer teach and they forfeited their salaries.[9]

Although throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, women were accepted as teachers and made up the majority of the teaching force, they were considered "separate and unequal" from their male counterparts until the 1930s and 1940s. This paper will examine some of the areas where women were not treated equally and why some of these changes took place.[10]

The most visible difference between men and women was salary. Women teachers received a lower pay than men in the United States and in Utah. A history of education in Utah explained that the difference was even greater in Utah. "The ratio of men to lady teachers in the state has been neearly the top in the nation for many years. . . . One of the reasons for this has been the fact that men teachers have been given a distinct advantage in salary."[11] For example, in 1883, men received 65 percent more for their teaching services than women.[12]

The first legislature of the state in 1896 tried to correct this inequality by passing a law that stated, "Females employed

as teachers in the public schools of this state shall in all cases receive the same compensation as is allowed to male teachers, for like services, when holding the same grade of certificate."[13] But this law was difficult to enforce since salaries were set by individual school districts. Women were always started at a lower salary than men; since many did not continue to teach for more than one or two years, their average salaries were always less than men. Throughout the 1900s, 1910s, and 1920s women received on an average only 70 and 80 percent of the male teachers' salaries.[14] Not until the late 1920s and early 1930s did the women's salaries equal 90 percent of the men's. By the mid 1930s the average women teachers' salaries surpassed the men's average. Although the districts' salary schedules differed, the gap between male and female teachers' salaries were about the same through the state.[15]

There were several reasons given as to why women were paid less than men. One of the reasons was that women were willing to work for less. There were few occupations open to women, and all of them paid less than teaching. Horace Mann used the argument that women would work for less as an argument to convince school districts to hire women. "A female will keep quite as good a school as a man, at two-thirds of the expense, and transfuse into the minds of her pupils, purer elements, both of conduct and character which will extend their refining and humanizing influences far outward into society, and far onward into futurity."[16]

The typical reason given as to why women were paid less than men was that they were single and did not have a family to support. In the 1910s one school district agreed that the starting salary of fifty-five dollars a month was not enough to support a family but then added that it was sufficient since most teachers were single.[17]

An article published in 1932 in the Utah education magazine listed some statistics that refuted this argument. It first stated that "Some are disposed to think of the teacher as an unmarried young woman with no other responsibility than to enjoy her young life with a munificient salary and an easy job that occupies but five or six hours a day for two-thirds of the year."[18] The article showed that while most of the teachers responding were single women their expenses were not that much less than married men and women. Especially single women who had to board out had to pay much more per person for food and other expenses than a married man who owned his own home. Some of the expenses like teacher development were equal regardless of martial status. Most single teachers paid little or no income tax because of their low salaries, but they were able to save less than their male counterparts because their salaries were so low. The article also pointed out that the average married male teacher supported 2.4 children and 2.2 adults including herself and the average married female supported 1.9 children and 1.9 adults including herself. Single teachers, male and female, carried responsibilibity for about 1.5 adults

including the teacher. Although they supported less people, quite often the single teachers had to support more than themselves.[19]

Another argument bypassed the women's financial needs and questioned whether men and women really did the same work. "Why pay men more for the same work?", one article in 1904 asked. "The answer is simple. The woman is not doing or cannot do the same work. She works as a woman, and after all cannot quite undo her true womanly self. The man, as a man is bringing into the boy's life what no woman can bring."[20] Therefore, since women could not perform as an efficient role in the classroom, they should not expect the same wages.

This so-called fundamental differences between men and women was an argument often used to discourage schools from hiring so many women. As more women were hired to teach in the schools, many educators felt that the occupation was becoming feminized and doubted the wisdom in the change. Several articles in national and local educational magazines questioned the value of hiring an increased number of women teachers.

In 1909 D. C. Jensen, a professor of education at Brigham Young College, wrote an article entitled "The Feminine Peril in the Schools." After carefully pointing out that "Our sisters are possessed of the same ideals of honesty, virtue, fidelity, pttriotism, and self-sacrificing devotion as their brothers," he explained that "should the presence of women to the exclusion of men in our school rooms be demonstrated to be in any sense

disadvantageous to the maturing youth, woman with her keen perception and susceptibility to the detection of deteriorating influences would not be slow to discover the evil tendencies and to suggest a remedy." [21]

Jensen then procedes to give his own explanation of the problem with women teachers and his own solutions. He explained that women's place is in the home and that nature had a way of dealing with female who tried to escape that responsibility "by completing eliminating her at death through leaving her without descendants to perpetuate her kind." But for Jensen that was not the main reason why women should not dominate the schoolrooms. First, it was a period of industrialism. Because of their basic natures, men understood these developments better than women. In the same vein, women thought in terms of home and family and men thought of careers and the marketplace. Jensen argued that boys needed the facts of "the real world" that only a man could give. If women only taught young boys, the males would become too interested in culture and not have enough interest in business. Although women in Utah had the vote, they were not involved in civic affairs; they only voted and did not worry about the community's development. A man would give "a more aggressive type of citizenship" to the classroom. Finally since boys developed later than girls, the boys needed a male figure to encourage them. His solution was to hire "womanly women" and "manly men" and to provide a balance of men in the elementary grades. Women should teach the younger

grades, but the seventh and eighth grades should be taught by men.[22]

Jensen's arguments were echoed by others in the education field. Viola Schumaker from Brigham Young University in her article "The Feminization of the Teaching Profession" agreed that women should be kept in the younger grades, but men needed to teach in the higher grades. She felt that higher salaries and tenure needed to be offered to the men to maintain enough of the male influence in the schools.[23] F. E. Chadwick's "The Women Peril in American Education" argued that "no women, whatever her ability, is able to bring up properly a man child."[24] Florence H. Hewitt responded to this article, but even though she refuted some of Chadwick's claims, she still believed that "the importance of maintaining a reasonable proportion of good men teachers is unquestionable and should be impressed upon the public by every effective means."[25]

Men were maintained as teachers for the upper grades in theory as well as in practice. Men were usually hired as the principals in the schools and taught the upper grades, especially when there were four or more classrooms in the schools. For example, in Sevier County, a man was nearly always hired as the principal regardless of his teaching experience or ability.[26]

Not everyone felt that men could do a more efficient job of teaching though. One teacher in Sevier County explained that the principal at the school in Glenwood one year that she taught

was not able to control his students and did not appear to be a good teacher.[27] The annual state bulletin on education in 1900 included a report from a female primary supervisor. She reported, "As a whole the teachers were found to be faithful and to some degree efficient altough there were marked exceptions, principally among the men teachers; some showed marks of dissipation, their schoolrooms were bare and cheeless, the recitations were conducted in a listless manner, the textbooks held in the hand and questions read from the book."[28] She described one classroom where the male teacher had "such a total lack of discipline that . . . the buzz and hum of voices was like a party or sociable."[29] In contrast, a primary school in the same county taught by a woman was so well organized and so well cared for that "one involuntary explained, 'an oasis in the desert!'" [30]

Women not only received lower salaries and were not accepted as equal in their abilities to teach, but they also were forced to quit when they married. Helen Redd explained that "our contract . . . said if we married during the year we forfeited our last month wages and would not be rehired."[31] Vera Summers moved to Box Elder County to teach because in that school district should could be paid all year and not just during the months that she taught. However, she questioned the value of the move for that reason because she married and lost not only her job but also her summer salary.[32] Luella Nielsen Oldroyd was allowed to teach the year after she married, but

there were a lot of complaints because people felt that she was taking a job away from a young girl who needed the money.[33] Dorothy Adams faced the same problesm when she married in 1937. "That was a hectic time. There was still a depression and many people needed jobs, so they passed a law making it illegal for married women to teach. We had to meet with the school board to see if they could let men finish the school term. They told me I could." [34]

As a rule though, it was taken for grant that women were not teach after they married. An article describing the problems of teacher turnover explained that women leaving the profession to become homebuilders should be commended.[35] Another article explained, "Women leave the profession when nature has called her to make a home and she must ever leave it for that same reason."[36] In addition, there was a great pressure on the teacher to marry. When asked, "Was it a pretty established procedure . . . that when the teachers come out, they go back married," a teacher replied, "Well, they liked to catch them a school teacher." [37]

This common belief that women left teaching to be wives and mothers and that it was not good for married women to teach was challenged. The article that showed that single women had many of the same expenses as married teachers questioned the belief that "teaching is often thought of as a stepping stone or temporary vocation in which the young woman maintains herself until marriage and through which the men pass to more profitable

business."[38] The report found that the median age for married teachers--nearly all men--was thirty-five while the average age for singles was about twenty-eight. Although the married age was higher, the single age was much higher than it would have been if only included women just out of normal school and who only taught for one or two years.[39]

It was also believed that since women only taught for a few years that they were not committed to the profession and were not efficient teachers. In an article entitled, "Marriage and Teaching Efficiency," Beatrice Kerr Morton explained that "the majority of the girls who yearly enter the profession plan to marry. They know that when they marry they will have to resign. It is impossible under these circumstances for them to take a truly serious interest in teaching."[40] She said if women could teach after marriage that they would be willing to give more to the profession. She said that married women were good teachers by using the same old argument that women related better to children especially if they were mothers themselves.[41]

During the 1920s and 1930s the status of women teachers gradually changed. By the 1930s women were starting to make as much money as male teachers. Educators questioned how salaries should be distributed and if all teachers should be given the same pay. Articles in the Utah educational magazine suggested that salaries should be bassed on the position held by the teacher, by terms negotiated with the teachers, and by a systematic schedule agreed on by the community.[42] Two years

later the magazine published the Box Elder School District's schedule which followed these guidelines. It provided for "equal pay for equal services." Principals and those who worked during the summer were given a higher salary. An allowance was given for dependents, but it was for wife or husband and minor children, not only wife and children. A merit clause was also included.[43] These single salary schedules eliminated much of the difference between male and female salaries.

Salaries for women teachers improved even more during World War II. During the war, there was a shortage of manpower for schools and industries in the United States; many of the men were drafted to fight in Europe and the Pacific. Women were hired to work in defense related jobs, and many left the schools for the higher paying jobs. There was a shortage of teachers throughout the state, and the educational magazine published a number of articles about the need for more teachers. One way the problem was solved was to pay higher salaries to all teachers.[44]

Another way that the school districts dealt with the shortage of teachers was to hire married women. Many of these women had only taught for one or two years before they married in the 1920s and only had one or two years of normal school training. Although they did not meet the current requirements for teaching, they were given emergency certificates. In some cases, they were almost drafted into service. Ada Palmer of Monticello, Ethel Jolley Jensen of Redmond, and Luella Nielsen

Oldroyd of Venice were all asked by their school district to return to the classroom. Each of them only had normal training and were on an emergency certificates. After the war ended, Ada Palmer decided that she did not want to continue to teach. Ethel Jolley Jensen and Luella Nielsen Oldroyd found that they enjoyed the return to the work force. They went to school during the summers and completed their bachelors' degrees. Ethel taught in the kindergarten in Salina, and Luella taught art in the junior high and high school in Richfield. Other teachers like Jensen and Oldroyd decided to stay in the work force and married women were allowed to continue in the schools.[45]

World War II helped improve the situation of women teachers because their salaries were better and married women were allowed to teach. Since then the women's movement has helped improve the situation of females in all areas of the job market. Overcoming the attitudes about male and female roles has not kept up with these changes though. In the 1960s it was still common for women to teach the younger elementary grades. Men were hired to teach the fifth and sixth grades and to serve as principals. Married women were allowed to teach, but they were forced to resign when they became pregnant.[46] These policies are changing now. The effects are positive not only for women who can teach in more grades, but it is also helpful for men who are now becoming more acceptable as teachers for young children. As the result of a long struggle, men's and women's work are no longer broken down into such narrow spheres, especially in the teaching profession.

[1]Redding Sugg, Motherteacher: The Feminization of American Education (Charlotteville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), preface.

[2]Ibid., p. 50.

[3]Ibid., p. 74.

[4]Julie Roy Jeffrey, Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1880 (New York: Hill and Wang), pp. 13.

[5]Ibid., 79-106.

[6]Ruth Witt Oral History, interview by Jessie Embry, 1977, Utah State Historical Society, interview in process; Thomas Edgar Lyons, "Evangelical Protestant Missionary Activities in Mormon Dominated Areas: 1869-1900" (Unpublished PhD Disseration, University of Utah, 1962).

[7]R. V. Larson, "Mary Ann Grant," Utah Educational Review 22 (April 1929), 378-379.

[8]Sugg, pp. 52-53.

[9]Jessie L. Embry, "The School Marms of San Juan County" (Unpublished paper in possession of author).

[10]The term "separate and unequal" is taken from English sources. The paper will mainly deal with problems faced in Utah by female teachers. The main sources are the educational journals and oral history interviews. Although only a few interviews are cited, over thirty interviews were used as a basis for conclusions.

[11]John Clifton Moffitt, The History of Public Education in Utah (np, 1946), p. 322.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

[14]The Utah School Reports published information on each district in the state during the early years and some listed salaries. The percentages are based on those reports. See especially L. J. Muir, Thirteenth Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Utah for the Biennial Period Ending June 30, 1920, pp. 28-29.

[15]"Salaries of Utah Teachers, Principals, Supervisors by District," Utah Education Review 29 (March 15, 1936), 282.

[16]Sugg, p. 77.

[17]Utah Educational Review 9(June 1916), 9.

[18]Irvin S. Noall, "Personal Factors Affecting Teachers' Salaries in Utah," Utah Educational Review 25 (May 1932), 403.

[19]Ibid.

[20]"Are There too Many Women Teachers," Educational Review (June 1904), 103.

[21]D. C. Jensen, "The Feminine Peril in the Schools," Utah Educational Review 2(February 1909), 16.

[22]Ibid., 16-19.

[23]Viola Schumaker, "The Feminization of the Teaching Profession," Utah Educational Review 4 (April 1911), 13-14.

[24]F. E. Chadwick, "The Women Peril in American Education," Educational Review (February 1918), 115.

[25]Florence H. Hewitt, "The Women Peril in American Education," Educational Review (February 1918), 411-415.

[26]Luella Nielson Oldroyd Oral History, interview by Jessie Embry, 1980, interview in process, Country School Legacy, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah, Hereinafter refered to as Country School Legacy.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Emma J. McVicker, Third Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Utah, for the Biennial Period Ending June 30, 1900, pp. 20-21.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Helen Redd Oral History, interview by Jessie Embry, 1973, p. 13, Southeastern Utah Oral History Project, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, Manuscript Division, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, Hereinafter refered to as Southeastern Utah.

[32]Vera Summers Oral History, interview by Jessie Embry, 1981, interview in process, Country School Legacy.

[33]Luella Nielsen Oldroyd Oral History.

[34]Dorothy Adams Oral History, interview by Richard Swanson, 1973, pp. 4-5, Southeastern Utah.

[35]George Thomas, "The Needs of the Teaching Profession," Utah

Educational Review 2(January 1909), 11.

[36]"Are There too Many Women Teachers," Educational Review (June 1904), 103.

[37]Lillian Grace Chadwick Oral History, interview by Verna Richardson, 1975, p. 19, Grouse Creek Oral History Project, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah

[38]Noall, p. 403.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Beatrice Kerr Morton, "Marriage and Teaching Eficiency," Utah Educational Review 31(May 1938), 281-282.

[41]Ibid.

[42]L. John Nuttal, Jr. "Schedules for Salaries," Utah Educational Review 32(November 1938), 76-77.

[43]Clifford L. Frye, "Salary Schedule Technique," Utah Educational Review 33(May 1940), 265.

[44]N. Blaine Winters, "The Teacher Situation in Utah," Utah Educational Review 36(February 1943), 157; N. Blaine Winters, "Teacher Supply in Utah: A Factual Summary," Utah Educational Review 36(December 1943), 130-132.

[45]Ada Palmer Oral History, interview by Jessie Embry, 1973, p. 4, Southeastern Utah; Ethel Jolley Jensen Oral History, interview by Jessie Embry, 1980, tape in process, Country School Legacy; Luella Nielsen Oldroyd Oral History.

[46]Personal experiences of the author in Cache County School District, Utah. The experiences cited occured at the North Logan Elementary School and Sky View High School in Smithfield, Utah.